NOTES ON SOME RATS OF THE *MUS METTADA* GROUP.

By

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Mr. Comber has kindly sent to me for examination two series of specimens: the one, collected by himself at Nasik, containing eight individuals, the other, by Major Liston, I.M.S., in the Konkan, containing five individuals.

All these specimens have only 5 plantar pads, and a mammary formula 2—2 = 8, characters that hitherto have been accepted as distinguishing *Mus mettada* from its congeners.

An examination of the dentition shows that four of the Nasik specimens, Nos. 133, 135, 136, 138, have distinctly stouter teeth than any of the rest. The remaining four Nasik specimens, Nos. 134, 137, 139, 140, while having smaller teeth, like the Konkan individuals, are distinguished from these latter by their smaller size and especially by their shorter hind feet.

The species *mettada* (the name *meltada* as originally published was, undoubtedly, a misprint) was established by Gray (l. c. inf.) on specimens collected by Elliot in the Southern Mahratta Country. The description is meagre and not very helpful, but fortunately the specimens are still in the British Museum Collection, and from these it appears that the form with the stouter teeth mentioned above is nearest to typical *mettada*, and the other two forms require names.

Key.

A.—Teeth stouter (length of upper molar row = 6—6·2 mm.), hind foot 24—25 mm.....(1) *Mus mettada.*

B.—Teeth weaker (length of upper molar row = 5·5—5·7 mm.).—

(*a*) Hind foot 24—25 mm. .....(2) *Mus listoni.*

(*b*) Hind foot 21·5—23 mm. .....(3) *Mus comberi.*

1. *Mus mettada*, Gray.

1837. *Golunda mettada*, Gray. Mag. Nat. Hist., I, p. 586.

1839. *Mus lanuginosus*, Elliot. Madr. Journ., X, p. 212.

Basing on some dimensions given by Elliot in his paper and on the

specimens sent home by him the following are measurements of the Nasik specimens compared with those of typical *mettada*:—

	133	135	136	138	Typical *mettada*.	
Age and Sex	A ♀	A ♀	A ♂	A ♀	—	A = adult.
Head and body.....	127	122	141	122	142	The body dimensions of typical *mettada* quoted from Elliot are those of "a large adult male."
Tail	103	?	?	104	109	
Hind foot	24	24	25	24	24	
Ear	21	20	21	21	20	
Skull : greatest length.	33·5	33	35	32·5	32	
„ basilar length..	27·5	26·5	28·5	26	27	
„ zygomatic breadth	16·2	16·1	16·3	15·8	16	
„ diastema	9·5	9	9·5	8·7	9	
„ upper molar row.....	6	6·1	6	6·2	6	

Until sexed and measured specimens are available for examination from the type locality (Dharwar), we must accept these four specimens as typical *mettada*, of which species they are at least a local race.

2. *Mus listoni*, sp. n.

Closely resembling *mettada*, but distinguishable by its smaller teeth.

The following are dimensions of Major Liston's five Konkan specimens :—

	119	120	121 Type	122	123	
Age and Sex	VO ♂	A ♂	O ♀	A ♂	A ♀	A=Adult, *i.e.*, posterior molar worn.
Head and body.....	151	141	132	144	134	O=Old, *i.e.*, all molars worn.
Tail	122	116	103	110	108	VO=Very Old, *i.e.*, all dental cusps worn flat.
Hind foot	25	25	24	25	24	
Ear	20	18	18	19	18	
Skull : greatest length.	35·5	34·5	33	33·5	34·5	
„ basilar length...	29·5	28	27	27·5	28·5	
„ zygomatic breadth.....	16·7	16·5	16·1	16	16·5	
„ diastema	10	9·5	9	9	9·5	
„ upper molar row	5·7	5·5	5·6	5·6	5·6	

Type.—B. M. No. 7. 1. 7. 6. An old ♀. Collector's No. W. L. 121. Obtained in the Konkan by Major W. Liston, I.M.S., and presented to the British Museum by the Bombay Natural History Society.

The indications of a difference in size between the sexes are here strongly marked.

There is little to distinguish *listoni* from *mettada*, except the difference in the size of the molars, but this difference is quite constant and easily appreciable even by the naked eye.

3. *Mus comberi* sp. n.

Outwardly resembling the two last species, but distinctly smaller.

Unfortunately, all Mr. Comber's specimens are females.

The following are dimensions of the four individuals :—

	134	137	140	139
Age and Sex	O ♀	A ♀	A ♀	Y A ♀
Head and body	120	125	119	118
Tail	105	102	105	98
Hind foot	21·5	22	23	22·5
Ear	20	18	20	20
Skull : greatest length	31·7	32	32	32
„ basilar length	27	26·5	27	27
„ zygomatic breadth	14·5	15	15·3	15
„ diastema	8·6	8·8	8·8	9
„ upper molar row	5·6	5·7	5·7	5·7

Type.—B. M. No. 7. 1. 7. 3. An old ♀. Collector's No. E. C. 134. Obtained by Mr. E. Comber at Nasik, and presented to the British Museum by the Bombay Natural History Society.

Its markedly inferior size, as compared with females of the two preceding species, both of body and skull, make *comberi* easily distinguishable from either.

I have pointed out that in the mammary formula and the plantar pads these three forms are alike, and this applies also to their colouration. The fact that the specimens I identify as *Mus mettada* and those I name *comberi* were taken in the same locality and differ in the size of the teeth justifies their specific separation. The specific separation of *comberi* and *listoni*, however, must depend on the non-existence of intermediates ; from my knowledge of the country I argue that the discovery of such is most unlikely, and I have not hesitated, therefore, to rank them both as species.

An interesting point indicated, if not proved, by these two series is the difference in the sexes. In *listoni* the males are markedly and

constantly larger than the females. The solitary male in the series of *mettada* seems to show that the rule holds in that species also, and I confidently expect that when a male of *comberi* is available for examination the same differences will be found to exist between the sexes in that species.

I would take this opportunity to ask members residing elsewhere than in the localities in which *comberi* and *listoni* have been found to send specimens of their local '*metad*' to the Society with a view to a more extended examination of the group, and, more especially, good specimens of *mettada* from the type locality (Dharwar) would be most valuable.